

The Grad News

The Newsletter of the Hopkins/Homewood Graduate Community

Volume 1
Issue 2

April / May
2000

GRO Happy Hours: Tuesdays at PJ's!

Observe the social habits of the Hopkins Grad: The GRO' famous Happy Hours at PJ's, just across Charles Street on Tuesdays, 5-9 pm. Food specials every week and Guinness and Bass STILL \$2.10 a pint!

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Grads Grill Deans over Lunch

Some fifty graduate students met with the deans over lunch on March 28 to discuss issues and raise grievances pertinent to them and to the wider graduate student population. The atmosphere remained quite amicable, although the graduate-participants asked a number of questions that the panel of deans could not readily respond to. The gathering lasted about an hour and a half, during which time deans Richard McCarty (Arts and Sciences), Ilene Busch- Vishniac (Engineering), Susan Boswell (Students), Gary Ostrander (Chair of the Graduate Board), Larry Benedict (Student Affairs), and Mary Ellen Porter (Executive Assistant to Dean of

Student Affairs) addressed a number of graduate student concerns.

Insurance was a prime concern, and many students raised questions relevant to their experiences with EFG/MEGA/Student Resources Insurance. Deans Ostrander and Benedict and Executive Assistant Porter fielded most of those questions. The problem of getting information from the insurance company has been aggravated by two problems this year, they said. First, the company changed over its computing system in September, which proved to be a rough transition from which they are just now catching up. For this reason

most Homewood grads did not get the 'permanent' laminated insurance card, or they received faulty, incomplete ones. Moreover, the computer snafu disrupted any efforts to send a questionnaire to Homewood students (and elsewhere) to survey what issues were of concern for the company's clients. The second problem is that JHU (and Georgetown) have rather more involved policies than other schools in the MEGA/SR system. Thus many graduates who have called the customer service desk of the company have been told information not relevant to the Hopkins policy just because

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Building a Career After Graduation

Flipping burgers for a living has been elevated to something of a cult status by Kevin Spacey, but not too many graduate students will be lining up outside McDonald's this summer. They cannot all claim to know exactly what they will be doing but, like Spacey, they are certainly more open to exploring their options than they were a few years before.

Take Vikrant K, who is about to graduate with a Master's in Electrical Engineering. A year ago, he was sure that he wanted

to go ahead and get a Ph.D., and then get a job in academia. While looking for an internship for the summer, he landed a full-time job with a company in North Carolina, and has decided to take a year off from school to see how he likes it. Or take Krishnan R, who has a Ph.D. in Bio-Medical Engineering. He had his mind set on an academic position; today he works for a Chicago-based multinational consulting company.

Vikrant and Krishnan are just

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Everyone has a reason for why they should not be doing what they are doing. And we have seen a number of graduate students who are considering options outside their discipline, and outside of academia as well.

Anne Kirchgessner, Career Development Officer at the Career Development Center

Building a Career

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two of examples of the changing demographic of graduate and doctoral students. Not so long ago one could safely assume that a graduate student would look for a job in his area of study and that if he went on to do a Ph.D. he would end up in academia. But a booming economy, the rise of the dot-coms and the changing workplace have encouraged graduate students to look beyond their disciplines and rethink their career paths.

Agrees Anne Kirchgessner, Career Development Officer at the Career Development Center (CDC), "Everyone has a reason for why they should not be doing what they are doing. And we have seen a number of graduate students who are considering options outside their discipline, and outside of academia."

Krishnan went through the CDC while doing his Master's to put together his resume and land some job interviews. But he didn't start weighing his options seriously until he was close to finishing his Ph. D. His faculty gave him leads to

academic positions, and he also hooked up with the department's alumni network.

It was through his department that he received an e-mail about a consulting company that wished to recruit Ph.D.'s. After several rounds of interviews, including one in Miami, Krishnan made the final cut. This year, he will assist his employer in picking new Ph.D. recruits from college campuses.

But Krishnan knows that not all PhD's can land a job outside of academia easily. For this, he says, there needs to be more initiative and enterprise both within the department and in the CDC. First, there needs to be a change in the attitude toward Ph.D.'s. "The general impression is that if you go outside academia, you are a failure," he says, when in fact it takes a lot of effort to venture off the beaten track. He believes that departments do not really train Ph.D. students for the outside world, and suggests the creation of an "industry track" that would better prepare students for non-academic positions.

"The industry will also be more interested in recruiting them," he points out. Currently, companies are not particularly interested in hiring Ph.D.'s, "because at this level you could really get pigeon-holed, and very few companies that come to campus want to recruit for upper-level, specialized positions," says Krishnan.

This is where the CDC can help, he says, with a person who can understand students' specific backgrounds, skills and needs, and be able to match them with positions that are available. He also suggests that a better online database be created, so that even smaller companies that don't come on campus - and which are

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Our Apologies:
The last issue of
The Grad News inadvertently re-
named the new Knapp Dean of
Arts and Sciences:
Dean Richard E. McCarty,
We apologize for the mistake.

Restaurant Review

Jr. is the kind of place that feels like an answer to a prayer. You know which prayer I mean, the one about finding a restaurant/café that serves all your needs-coffee and scones in the morning, a dinner date in the evening, lunch with parents, burgers and beer. A place, in short, where you can go when you can't decide what it is you want - a place to please everyone. That answered-prayer feeling is the result of two happy events. First, the physical space of the restaurant: Located on a choice corner in dignified Bolton Hill, *jr.* --pronounced "junior" --is an open dining room with a coffee bar at the back. Though the interior is small, the high, high ceilings and several floor-to-ceiling windows create an air of lovely spaciousness that dominates the place. Ceiling fans whirl pleasantly and sunlight streams in through the windows, setting off the light wood of the 12 or so tables that are scattered around. Large, colorful folk-art-style drawings hang above the coffee bar at the back. The other cream-colored walls feature a changing display of local artwork. The restaurant is often busy-it seems to have many regulars-but its karma is al-

ways peaceful. A few tables outside quickly fill up on nice days.

The second happy event is the menu. The owners of *jr.* are Spike and Charlie Gjerde, who also own Spike and Charlie's in Mount Vernon (this place is "junior" to that), the Joy America Café in the Visionary Art Museum, and the Atlantic in Canton. They describe the menu as "American home style cooking," which turns out to be updates of comfort food classics. There's a juicy "*jr.* burger," sided by a pile of thin, crispy fries; sandwiches such as a thick turkey club, BLT, portobello mushroom with caramelized onions and walnut-feta spread; Caesar and chopped chicken salads; soups such as a creamy, flavorful tomato soup with flecks of carrots and parmesan; crispy individual grilled pizzas. Most of the sandwiches (all of which include fries) and salads are price \$6- \$8. At the higher end are pasta dishes, including chicken penne and shrimp linguini, which range \$7-\$11. The dinner menu includes most of

jr.
1501 Bolton Street
(corner of Bolton
and Mosher in
Bolton Hill)
410-462-9064

Mon-Fri, 7am - 9pm;
Sat, 9-9:30; Sun, 9-
4:30 (brunch starts at
10:30 on weekends)
Beer and wine

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AT THE MOVIES:

Buried Treasure

to the Max

Part of the fun of academia is the license to craft silk purses of erudition out of the sow's ear of crap culture. Nothing adds an air of legitimacy to B-grade movies like musing on them as cinematic metaphors of contemporary alienation. You're bound to hear at least two papers on the politics of gore in the films on Herschel Gordon Lewis at the annual Popular Culture Association conference, and can a dissertation on Jerry Bruckheimer's phallus of noise be far behind? Studying literary criticism is very much like shopping at a thrift store: someone's trash is someone else's thesis. A little bit of creativity and a whole lot of ingenuity . . . and who knows what treasures you'll find obscured by a few layers of dust?

Once you've broadened your mind to embrace yard-sale scholarship, you may be ready to rediscover "Valley Girl" (Martha Coolidge, 1983). This is a truly great movie. Even on Superstation TBS on a Saturday morning, with all the profanity edited out or crudely dubbed over,

it's a truly great movie. It often gets lumped in with those silly pre-John Hughes horny teenager comedies, which is a shame, because there's so much here to be viewed through a critical lens.

Even if lit crit isn't your bag, there's something for everyone in "Valley Girl." The wonderful soundtrack (available as a two-CD compilation from Rhino Records) harkens back to the good old days when MTV actually played music videos. The story starts as a modern revision of "Romeo and Juliet" but takes off from there: the consumer-elite from the San Fernando Valley meets the tragically hip from Hollywood and all hell breaks loose at the junior prom. Of course, the plot is a mere premise to showcase a brilliant time capsule of pop culture: the clothes, the music, the food, and the vernacular as presented here glow with a zeitgeist still so vivid I can't believe it all happened almost 20 years ago. This film utterly nails the indefinable quality that made the 80s such an interesting time to be reinventing the wheel of adolescence, even before the Flock of Seagulls haircut and parachute pants.

The very best thing about this great movie is a very young and hirsute Nicolas Cage and his performance as Randy, the sexy goofball

punk who dares transgress the rigid mores of the Southern Californian class

system. One will either appreciate his sheer potential for serious star quality, or one will be inclined to mourn the honest neurotic sweetness he seems to have lost with top billing status. Each line is delivered with such liquid intensity that it's easy to see how he has since become such a parody of himself. (I still do love Cage with all my heart, although I feel compelled to apologize for him these days and think he ought to be forced to hand over that Best Actor 1995 Oscar to its rightful winner, Sean Penn.) Randy typifies the conflicted ache of passion and coolness so perfectly that he may be regarded as a Holden Caulfield for a plastic age. (There was a time Cage could play a convincing romantic lead, but anyone who suffered through "City of Angels" knows that won't be happening again anytime soon.)

As far as I'm concerned, "Valley Girl" is required viewing for anyone who attended high school in the 80s

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GRO Sponsors a Lunch to Speak with the Deans

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the representatives were unaware of the need to consult that policy specifically. Porter said that MEGA/SR have promised to assign two representatives trained to help JHU students and their claims.

Executive Assistant Porter recommended that anyone needing off-campus care consult the Alliance website to find doctors and labs in the system, and thus in regular contact with the forms and procedures necessary to ensure reduced fees: www.mamsi.com

The cost of insurance, of course, bothers many grads. Dean Ostrander accepted the fact that up-front payment in September was difficult to meet on a stipend, which was also taxed. He said that during

the spring term his office had been conducting a department-by-department review of how best to delegate the (rising) funds that each received. The payment of insurance fees by those departments (pre-tax) was discussed, but left to the discretion of departments. These meetings, he admitted, were disrupted by the departure of Dr. Kessler and the appointment of Dean McCarty. Ostrander also said that insurance fees in Baltimore are comparable to such 'high-risk' cities as New York and Chicago. The fees are calculated by such issues as the number of persons covered, the extent of benefits (which is wide for JHU students, as it includes pregnancy and AIDS treatment), and past history of use of the

group. Dean Benedict pointed out that JHU students are keenly aware of medical technologies, which means that they know to ask for the latest name-brand drug (for example), which in turn drives up costs across the group.

The issue of 'Non-Resident Status' (pertinent in the Arts) came up as well. As the statutes currently stand, someone on N.R.S. is not allowed to work on campus, even though he or she was still expected to pay over \$1000 a term for 'upkeep.' It was suggested that these students, usually third or fourth-year students writing their dissertations, had both

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Grads Lunch with the Deans

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experience at Hopkins and flexible schedules that made them ideal candidates to get involved in the Student Consulting Program (SCAP), the GRO/Graduate Symposium, even the GRO itself.

Deans Ostrander and Benedict admitted a problem with the current guidelines, but they pointed out that the number of N.R.S. students was quite high, and the campus could not find positions for many of them if they wanted to come back to such jobs. A follow-up question pointed out that non-US citizens in a particular bind, because their visas forbid work outside their studies, and Hopkins penalizes them for working on-campus while writing their theses.

Hiring practices also was a point of contention. Despite the recent rash of hiring (departments in the Sciences were mentioned), women remained strikingly in the minority of both faculty and applicants. Dean Busch-Vishniac responded that "The Provost's Committee on the Status of Women" has not concentrated yet on the specific departments mentioned, but that it has encouraged (with some success) the hiring of women in both A&S and Engineering. She conceded that the focus at Homewood is on women at this time, and thus the racial diversity of the faculty and graduate body

remained problematic.

Finally, the situation in the library inspired some complaints, despite the much-touted remodeling of M-Level and consolidation of shelving. Noise remains a perennial issue, as does the lack of opportunity to peruse journals held in Gilman or Moravia Park. Dean McCarty said that there were no plans to make them consultable. A wave of (sarcastic?) laughter filled the hall when one graduate pointed out that, despite the millions put into the library, she could not plug her computer into any grad-student carols, all of which lacked plugs.

The meeting provided a non-confrontational venue for graduates to express their frustrations, questions, or suggestions. This reporter hopes that such meetings, perhaps one a semester, continue into the future. However, one cannot help but fear that these are precisely the sorts of gatherings that get administrators off the hook; that by responding to questions they avoid having to make real and timely changes to the problems raised. The willingness of the deans to participate and the attitude of the graduates' questions bode well. It is hoped that neither the grievances nor the opportunities to solve them are simply forgotten.

Christopher Gardner
Department of History

Want to play volleyball this summer? The GRO is organizing two summer leagues:

B League is co-ed (with at least 1 female player on the court at all times) with teams of six players—

A League is played with four players.

Games run Mondays-Thursdays at 6 and 7pm from the end of May.

Elect yourself captain, put a team together, decide on a name and contact **Georg Hasselmann** (schalke@jhu.edu) with preferences of the days and times you would prefer to play

FREE Coffee and
Cookies for Those
Who Need Them
Most: Grad
Students!
*Have a cup, sit
back, and eat a
cookie.*



A new GRO event designed to pump you full of caffeine and sugar. May 3rd, 10th (4-5:pm), and Beginning weekly in the fall in the Gilman Hall Entryway. Contact – stapon@jhu.edu

The **GRO Soccer Club** wishes to express its thanks to the *Johns Hopkins Alumni Association*, who made a generous contribution of \$700 for the purchase of uniforms and equipment. Thanks to the Alumni Association and the GRO, we will continue to field a team in the Soccer League. The GRO Soccer Club hopes for a continued association with the Hopkins Alumni and for continued success on the soccer field.



Dirk Bönker
GRO Soccer Club

Building a Career

(Continued from page 2)

more likely to be in need of specific skills - will be able to pick up a student's resume easily.

The problem, as some grad students see it, is that while Hopkins does have sound arts, science and engineering programs, its reputation is that of a Medical school with a strong research background and so only a certain kind of companies come to campus. A collective effort must be made by the various departments and the CDC to attract more companies to campus, and better equip grad students to secure jobs in them. It has been pointed out that schools such as Stanford, Yale, Harvard, and Towson provide grad students with far more leads and access to a wider choice of companies recruiting on campus.

According to Kirchgessner, this year 276 grad students have been registered for JobTrak (as against more than 1,000 undergrads). The results of a survey of students who graduated last year (grad and undergrad) indicate that almost 30 per cent got their jobs through on-campus recruitment, JobTrak and the alumni network.

Currently, as Vikrant points out, a grad student who wishes to go to an on-campus interview has to go through the Job Fairs, JobTrak, and the requisite CDC workshops in resumes and interviews. This is time-consuming, he feels, and sometimes unnecessary. "A grad student typically knows how to present himself and put a resume together. Some of the guidelines and services - like the resume referral - are useful, but we must have the option of choosing the sessions we want to attend. Most of them are aimed at undergraduates," he says.

Kirchgessner however, is of the opinion that while the workshops and panels are attended more by undergrads than grads, the skills are invaluable to anyone. "Grad students may feel inhibited by the presence of so many undergrads, or even stay away because they think they ought to know what to do. But it is perfectly okay to ask for a resource; you may learn something useful that you hadn't thought of," she says. She points out that the CDC has held workshops specifically for grad students, the last one being 'Beyond the Ivory Tower' which focused on jobs outside the academia for PhD's.

Kirchgessner feels that while grad students are more focused in their search for jobs, they still need to go through the process like anyone else. "Sometimes, it's actually harder for grad students because they've been so focused in one direction and it's difficult to look beyond that. But the process of looking for a job is very different from the academic process. Especially in the case of grad students who haven't worked much outside the university -

they are less oriented to the job search and communication process," she says.

While the CDC helps students in these areas and points out resources and strategies, Kirchgessner is also aware that only a select group of companies comes to campus, and that not every student is interested in them. So she suggests that students will need to use different vehicles - the department, the alumni network, panels, and job fairs.

In the case of Vikrant, it was an independent search that landed him a job in a company that does not come to campus. According to him, an independent search offers more flexibility and options because there are more IT companies coming to campus than say, companies looking for graduates in Mechanical or Electrical Engineering.

He is at least better off than Arts and Humanities graduates whose options and resources are even more limited as Ava Chin, a Writing Seminars grad student, discovered. Looking for a position in academia, Ava drew a blank with regards to resources in the CDC. She feels that the CDC must tailor more of its services for grad students - a system to store and generate letters of recommendation, for instance. Ava, and most of her classmates who conducted independent job searches with some leads from the faculty, feel that the various departments need to be more supportive of students. "Particularly because we are usually so focused on our theses and dissertations that we are quite cut off from the outside world and therefore need more resources and information. And, the demand for our skills is a lot less than the demand for Science or Engineering graduates, so we need more support," she says. She points out that there is also less alumni networking in the arts, and that needs to be developed.

Kirchgessner agrees that departments must play a greater role, as the faculty is better aware of students' skills and needs. She also has a suggestion on how grad students can handle a job search: treat it like a research project. "This is where grad students have the advantage; they ready have strong research skills and analytical skills. Look at CDC as a resource for links, leads and opportunities. That way, you can consider more options, and feel more comfortable about your decision," she says.

Wonder if that is the explanation for Spacey's happy smile while flipping burgers.

Rina Chandran
The Writing Seminars

The GRO—Grad News Staff would like to thank all those who have made this publication possible over the year: **Anelle Landefeld** and all the prompt & courteous staff at **Sir Speedy Printing** (115 N. Charles St.) kept us looking good (on paper). Thanks also to those who submitted stories and reviews for one of our editions over the past academic year. In particular: **Rina Chandran** contributed a number of well-researched stories on academic life at Homewood. And **Lynda Del Genis** submitted (often at short notice) movie reviews that went beyond mere star-ratings.

Have a pleasant & productive summer, Go Os, and we'll see you in the fall

The Graduate Representatives' Organization—Levering Hall (Inside the Student Activities Office) Phone: 410- 516- 7682

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Check out our Web Site:
<http://www.jhu.edu/gro/>

**Check It
Out!**

New (and Improved): GRO Executives for 2000-2001!

Co-Chairs: Tony Stapon (Chemistry)
and Mike Paraskewich (DOGEE)

Secretary: Claudia Ketchmer (Physics &
Astronomy)

Treasurer: A run-off will be held
between Cyprian Tutu (Computer Sci-
ence) and John Long (Material Sciences).
The results arrived after *The Grad News*
went to press.

Good luck to all

Restaurant Review

the previous as well as entrees such as a tender rosemary chicken with garlic mashed potatoes, pork tenderloin and baked beans (excellent), and pot roast with caramelized vegetables. These run up to around \$18.

The chef, Ronde Murphy, used to cook at the Charleston downtown, and it shows in sophisticated touches and the attention paid to presentation. Fresh-baked bread is brought to the table right away. The night's specials might include monkfish over couscous, or sage-battered fried chicken with sweet potato puree. One night a friend of mine raved about a plate of perfectly baked salmon that was accompanied by a lovely mess of balsamic -marinated portobellos, red onions, and spinach. And *jr.* is also actively wooing the student population: From 2 to 5 every day, a student ID gets you a burger or pizza with a fountain drink for five bucks.

The changing roster of desserts is alone worth a trip. I can testify to a perfectly tart-sweet key lime tart, color added with a drizzle of raspberry sauce, and a fine blueberry bread pudding. *Jr.* only serves full breakfast on weekends, but starting at 7am on weekdays they have coffee, tea, espresso drinks, and fine baked items, including muffins with satisfyingly large tops.

Sigh. Not every request in a prayer can be answered, of course. The sesame chicken salad was accompanied by a bland dressing. A chicken "rotilla" sandwich sounded great (coconut rice, peanut sauce, portobellos, carrots) but was also surprisingly lacking in flavor. (When you can't tell what's rice and what's chicken, there's a problem.) Service is spotty. The college-age waitrons are friendly, but often oblivious. "It's cute," said one waitress when I asked her to describe a dessert. Moments later, she served me lukewarm decaf coffee.

But I stand by my original statement. The quiet, friendly atmosphere of *jr.*, the high ceilings, the sunlight, the French fries and the bread pudding--all add up to a neighborhood-hangout of a restaurant that makes you forget flaws. Best of all, Charles Village seems a planet away. After a meal, take a walk through the leafy streets of Bolton Hill. Admire the 19th century townhouses, the trees, the blooming gardens, the sense of faded grandeur.

Listen to the silence. What happened to the sirens?

Elisa Murray
The Writing Seminars

AT THE MOVIES, PART II: BURIED TREASURE

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and grad school in the 90s. Unlike the retrospective nostalgia trip of "The Wedding Singer," which examines the decade through a glass darkly, "Valley Girl" survives as an historic document: comparing these two films is like comparing John Fowles and Charles Dickens in their treatment of the nineteenth-century British novel. If new historicism exists as a valid mode of cinematic criticism, "Valley Girl" may well be studied alongside "Citizen Kane" in the 21st century. For sure, like, totally.

Lynda Del Genis
Special to the GRO